

ALL GOOD things come to an end and Wycombe Wanderers' brave F.A. Cup run was finally terminated at the second round stage on Saturday at Loakes Park by the highly professional Peterborough United, who deservedly won a place in round three and a home tie against Southend.

For more than 50 minutes, Wanderers gave as good as they got from the Fourth Division leaders but in the end it was the sheer professionalism that got the better of them. Peterborough's fitness, their enormous strike power and general competence did them proud.

Their whole outlook to this game was completely different to that of Newport, who crashed 3-1 to the Blues on the memorable day last month. Wycombe were watched, scrutinised and catalogued. To avoid travel fatigue the Peterborough squad stayed the night at Beaconsfield and their preparation to this game was so thorough, they even hired a local ground with a pronounced slope, to condition themselves to Loakes Park. And it paid off in the end.

But while praising Peterborough, one should not forget Wanderers. They overcame some seemingly insurmountable problems to get this far in the Cup — only the third time in their 79 years that they had reached this stage. Injury after injury dogged their hopes — but they overcame it all.

The truth is, however, they just weren't quite good enough. True, they had just as much spirit and determination as the Posh, but on sheer ability alone, Peterborough were superior.

Their defence was strong, tight and seldom stretched. Never once were Wanderers allowed to send those perfected through balls down the middle, the sort of attack that destroyed Newport. Their attacks were mainly restricted to the flanks and the subsequent crosses were

well cut out by the big Chris Turner and Paul Jones.

If Wycombe threatened to dominate one aspect of the game, it was midfield. Here Terry Reardon, Larry Pritchard and Mick Holfield worked like trojans to provide a consistent service to their front men. They succeeded too, in fact, often picking up loose possession in the early stages.

But it was up front that the game was really won or lost. As hard though Wycombe's trio worked, they could not match the sheer penetration of the United forwards. Jim Hall, all six

noise suddenly slackened, as if in anticipation of what was to come.

The terraces did come to life with the equalising goal just on half-time, but in the second half it was the Posh supporters who won the day.

Apart from coping with the threat of Robson, Williams was soon in trouble after only five minutes when he lost one of his contact lenses. An S.O.S. over the tannoy soon brought the spare set, however, via his wife Sue.

Early on, Wycombe moved well. Roger Grant, who played probably his finest game for Wycombe, was always a threat,

only help the ball on its way, but then, with just injury time to add on, they pulled back with a superb goal at exactly the right time. From another free kick, Horsemann stepped over the ball and Reardon flighted it cleverly into the box. Although badly positioned, Larry Pritchard launched himself to steer a brilliant header wide of Drewery from about eight yards.

The equaliser did great credit to Wanderers and was no more than they deserved for all out effort. It was also fitting that Pritchard should have scored for his constant effort and encouragement.

In the 35th minute, Peterborough went one up. The goal was made by Hall, who controlled the ball perfectly on the bottom wing. He waited precisely the right time to cross where Robson challenged with Williams and Reardon. The ball

of the half for Wycombe. But then, with just injury time to add on, they pulled back with a superb goal at exactly the right time. From another free kick, Horsemann stepped over the ball and Reardon flighted it cleverly into the box. Although badly positioned, Larry Pritchard launched himself to steer a brilliant header wide of Drewery from about eight yards.

The equaliser did great credit to Wanderers and was no more than they deserved for all out effort. It was also fitting that Pritchard should have scored for his constant effort and encouragement.

Michael challenged. In raced Mick Holfield catching the ball perfectly with all his power on the volley. It was the sort of chance that hits the net once in ten times and on this occasion it roared high into the crowd behind the goal.

Mick's effort typified Wycombe's dilemma. They had to produce something totally out of the ordinary to break through Peterborough's stubborn defence as their usual moves, which have brought them a hatful of goals in league matches, just weren't allowed through.

Peterborough's crucial third goal that finally killed off Wanderers' hopes, arrived in the 72nd minute. Seconds earlier, Williams had cleared off the line from Hall but the ball was once again returned to the penalty area where Hall, left tragically unmarked as the Blues stood appealing for offside, calmly walked around Maskell and planted the ball home.

After that, it was really just a matter of time. United were too good to let a two-goal lead slip from their grasp and they could now afford to play some attractive football. Wycombe were starved of possession as they slipped the ball around and Freddie Hill, their former international, looked more like a youngster than a veteran.

Just before the close, however, Pritchard exemplified the spirit of the home club when he fired in a low drive from ten yards, forcing Drewery to dive full length to save. It was Wycombe's last shot in this year's F.A. Cup. They may not have reached round three and the glory that goes with it, but they have provided many people with some first class entertainment over the last few months.

WYCOMBE WANDERERS: J. Maskell; R. Williams, P. Wood, D. Bullock, R. Grant; T. Reardon, L. Pritchard, M. Holfield; A. Horsemann, D. Evans, S. Perrin. Sub. A. Brothers (not used).

PETERBOROUGH UNITED: M. Drewery, K. Bradley, C. Turner, M. Jones, J. Carmichael, B. Murray, F. Hill, P. Walker, J. Cozens, J. Hall, T. Robson. Sub. S. Oakes (not used).

REFEREE: J. Hunting (Leicester). **HALL-TIME:** 1-1. **GOALSCORERS:** Wycombe, Pritchard (45); Peterborough, Cozens 2 (35, 62), Hall (72).

OFFICIAL ATTENDANCE: 10,200.

Wycombe W. 1, Peterborough U. 3

Report by STUART EARP



foot of him, was the target man and although closely marked by Dave Bullock, he was able to create half a dozen chances, two of which were put away by John Cozens, who must be scoring in his sleep. The former Hillingdon Borough leader was a constant threat and picked up the half chance without batting an eyelid. It was easy to see why he has scored four goals in just two games and 14 altogether this season. The other front man was winger Tommy Robson, the former Newcastle flyer. Robson gave full back Rob Williams a thorough grilling all afternoon, his sheer pace foxing Rob time and again.

But the danger of the Peterborough forwards didn't really materialise until half-an-hour's play and up until that time, it seemed Wanderers held the edge on their professional opponents. Indeed they often had the Posh worried at the back, and were being spurred on by the packed crowd of 10,200. Then, after the visitors had two quick efforts disallowed, the

overlapping intelligently and taking on his opposing full back. Mick Holfield too, was always willing to run with the ball, sometimes making as much as 30 yards with his lightning acceleration. It took 15 minutes for the Blues to get their first shot at goal, through Dylan Evans, who blasted wide after a cross from Holfield.

Wanderers were still pressing forward, however, until out of the blue, Peterborough showed a glimpse of the attacking power that has taken them to the top of the Fourth Division. And in the space of just two minutes, they could have been 2-0 up.

Firstly, Turner booted a high free kick into the Wycombe box when Hall outjumped the defence and gave Cozens the chance of a superb diving header, only for the Peterborough skipper to be ruled off-side. Then 60 seconds later, Robson had the ball in the net again when Hall once more laid the ball off, right into the path of Robson who chipped for the far post. Bullock, on the line, could

squirted out to Cozens who prodded it home.

This was only the second goal conceded in six F.A. Cup matches this season but it was one that should easily have been avoided.

A few seconds later Wanderers almost fell further behind when Cozens for once missed a great chance. Robson's corner was headed out by Bullock but fell straight to Hall. Although his angle was poor, Hall fell fly with full power and Maskell could only parry the ball straight to the feet of Cozens. It seemed a certain goal, but Cozens scooped the ball onto the underside of the crossbar and Holfield cleared hastily.

Wanderers made the most of the let-off and in the 43rd minute almost got back on level terms. Reardon flighted over a free kick to Horsemann who leapt high to send his head just past the post with 'keeper Mick Drewery struggling.

It seemed the last opportunity